

Amendment to the Specification:

Please delete the paragraph starting on page 9, line 7 to page 9 line 16, and replace with the following amended paragraph:

--Although fibers 14 are initially arranged in a generally planar pattern in face layer 12 as illustrated in Fig. 5, a portion of fibers 14 are needle punched or hydraulically needled (spunlaced) toward bottom surface 18 as illustrated in Fig. 6. When mechanical needle punching is used, the needling density is at least over 500 penetrations per square inch ~~[[([ppi)]]~~ (ppsi) and preferably over 1,000 ~~[[([ppi)]]~~ ppsi. The web of fibers 14 is needled from top surface 16 with a relatively large number of needle penetrations per unit area. Generally, the needle punch density is from about 250 needles/in² to about 2000 needles/in². In one embodiment, web 14 has a needle punch density of at least about 250 needles/in². Alternatively, the needle punch density is at least about 500 needles/in². Preferably, the needle punch density is at least 1000 needles/in².--